Crisp Polenta Cakes with Garlicky Mushrooms

2 supper portions · Active 30 min · Total 45 min

Skills: Confident beginner

Ingredients

- 14 oz firm ready-cooked plain polenta, cut into eight 1/2-inch (1 cm) slices (400 g)
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon olive oil (20 ml), divided
- 9 oz mushrooms, thickly sliced (250 g)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped (6 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon dried thyme (0.25 g)
- 1/4 cup milk (60 ml)
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream (45 ml)
- 2 packed cups baby spinach, washed and dried (60 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon fine salt (1.5 g)
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper (0.5 g)
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley (4 g)

Set out

10-inch (25 cm) nonstick skillet, Thin spatula, Two serving plates and a loose cover, Measuring cup

Allergens

Milk; check packaged polenta for additional allergens. Check labels and substitutions.

Make it

1. Pat the polenta slices dry. Heat 2 teaspoons of the oil in the skillet over medium heat. Cook four slices for 4–5 minutes per side until golden and crisp. Transfer directly to the two plates and cover loosely. Repeat with another teaspoon of oil and the remaining slices.

2. Add the remaining teaspoon of oil to the skillet. Cook mushrooms over medium-high heat for 7–9 minutes, turning occasionally, until their liquid evaporates and some edges brown. Reduce the heat and stir in garlic and thyme for 30 seconds.

3. Pour in milk and cream, scraping the pan gently. Simmer for 2 minutes. Add spinach, salt and pepper and fold for 1–2 minutes until wilted and the sauce lightly coats the mushrooms.

4. Spoon the hot mushroom mixture over the polenta cakes, scatter with parsley and serve immediately. If a polenta product specifies a minimum reheating instruction, follow it before serving.

Buy for the shelf you have

Check whether your cooked polenta needs refrigeration before opening. A shelf-stable package may save cold space while sealed, but its opened storage instructions still apply.

A useful detail

Firm polenta cakes brown more reliably if their faces are dry and the pan is not crowded. They are cooked in two batches rather than forced into one layer that does not fit.

Keep it well

Refrigerate leftovers promptly within 2 hours, or 1 hour above 90°F/32°C, in shallow containers at 40°F/4°C or below. Use within 2 days or the polenta package’s shorter limit. Reheat throughout to 165°F/74°C; the cakes will soften under the sauce. Keep unused milk and cream refrigerated.